2/12/72

Dear Pearl,

Glad to hear from you. Silence fathered fear you returned to troubles. Save for the fatigue of the (tax) season in Lil, we are as we were, my finger not well but not as inhibiting (I finished working up that same tree today, with the same machete). I can type with less concern, less discomfort, less guilt.

Striso: remain with misgivings on all but daring and intelligence. He could well be a good source, but I urge independent checking and confirmation on everything...Has Minkle returned to California? I suppose, else why would Striso seek counsel there?...There is one area in which you may have something to lose, and that is getting tied up, esp. with wrongies. Play it not cool, but very, very cool AND independent. You need nothing for a good book but the application of fingers to keys and some thought. Anything else you get is +++ but not nittygritty. So be careful, please. And when you have finished your Digest piece, try to find time to work on this. The time is NOW. Do not await perfection and totality. Here let me tell you the tale of a friend of mine in Chicago who had a good contract for a good book for which he has a good title, CROOK COUNTY (Chicago is Cook County). He had most of it done. It is on crooked politics, esp. mob connections. He kept delaying finishing, now for at least two years. He kept telling me he was getting close to a case on the famous former Judge and Presidential Commission Cahirman Otto Kerner. I kept telling him two things: if he got it, the book couldn't come out before the news broke as new; and a paraphrase of Che: the duty of a writer is to write. So, the Kerner story broke, he can have it in his book or not, it now makes little difference, for all the rest he had, no less sensational, is in the news. He'd have had a helluva book that would now be enjoying a second life. But a year ago the publisher wrote the advance off.

I am no lawyer, but if you have a case against the coming book, it may be better to await its appearance. Any suit against it may sell it better and reduce the market for yours. Too bad you didn't find out from your literary-lawyer friend, to whom I'll write soon about my own troubles. There may be more. I'm told FRAME-UP is largely plagiarized in the current Esquire. Plagiarism is no easy thing to prove. I hope I can remember my own work well enough. Back in 1966 I was sharp enough to catch the carelessness with my typos. I do not know if I will try and do anything if it is provable. If I had a book to sell, I would. But I have resigned myself to what I fear my role must be and to the degree possible devote myself to it. Unless there is a firm legal need either way, you should, if I may suggest, decide what best serves Pearl's interest. Here a good agent could be invaluable....If you have none, there are people in publishing I know who might be able to help. And I may be in NYC soon, so let me know....You should be sure your deal with the Digest does not preclude book. If it does, try to get that back, with the offer of first turndown of secondary rights to them on what is not to be in piece. Fine print can be hard on more than the eyes....Wait a minute. I just noticed you may have a deal cooking. Great if not with the kind of small crooks I've been ealing with. Big crooks steal more- but they have more to steal from, so you get more. If you do not want to keep it secret, let us see what I know bad about them. Who knows good?

Glad your children's father is trying to help at least. If you didn't have that to worry about, you could get started. You do have some promising properties. That Cortes-Never-Had-It-So-Bad deal could be great fun.

From your description of "the book you did on J. Edgar", I suppose, since thatcould refer to any of them, you mean the latest, which is a rather finely-drawn delineation of the superior qualities and professional perfection he enjoys. It sort of got that reputation, not unearned, from the Publisher's Weekly comment that is was pure TNT on him who I called in it St. Edgar The Indispensible. But the funny think is I have one with that sainted word in the title yet, and nobody calls that one one on him. I'll send. But surface mail.

I do look forward to your nosing that grindstone. All alone. You neither need nor want collaborators. And publishers do have editors (waittill you see what they did to FRAME-UP!). With such a subject, your native flippancy of expression could be zingy.

Glad your boy is back (does he hate being called a boy yet by someone as old as his grandfather may be?). Hope he sinks his teeth in proper preparation for whatever it turns out he wants to do with himself. Good luck!